



NRA Action Pistol

by Craig Ginger



The Smith & Wesson Cup is proudly sponsored by Grycol International and Smith & Wesson.



Smith & Wesson handguns figure prominently in Action Match competition.

NRA Action Pistol is one of the most demanding, if not the most difficult, handgun competition available to the sporting shooter. Developed in 1979 by John Bianchi, a former LAPD police officer and then CEO of holster manufacturing giant Bianchi International, the match included variations from existing handgun competition such as IPSC and PPC. The Bianchi Cup Invitational Pistol Tournament became famous as the world's richest handgun event and attracts the very best of the world's handgun competitors.

In 1985, the National Rifle Association (NRA) took control of the Bianchi Cup Tournament and since that time has awarded the trophy to the National Action Match Champion. Each year in Columbia, Missouri, the NRA hosts the Bianchi Cup at the Green Valley Rifle and Pistol Club and once again

the SSAA will be sending a team of Australia's best handgun professionals to compete against shooters from around the globe.

Those considering entering NRA Action Pistol need to be aware of some basic prerequisites. The process to obtain a firearm licence to possess and use handguns for legitimate sporting purposes demands a focused sense of purpose. Joining a pistol club, fulfilling the probation attendance requirements, satisfying your state or territory judicial requirements for the issue of a firearm licence, undertaking both a personal obligation and legal requirement for adequate security of your handgun and meeting the club attendance regime are all steps which must be overcome before you even begin to think of the self-discipline required to develop your skills within the sport. The club will assist you in understanding the process involved and achieving

your desired outcome.

The 2002 National Handgun Agreement (NHA) redefined on a national basis the rules by which sporting handgun activity could be undertaken. It now requires a strong dedication to remain within this disciplined sporting activity and despite the bureaucratic hurdles, participation brings immense personal satisfaction. The first question to be answered before entering NRA Action Pistol, or any other handgun discipline, is can I dedicate the time?

So you made the commitment and stand ready to buy your first handgun and associated equipment for NRA Action Pistol. Our advice is to listen to and observe the activities of those who are already in the sport. There will be no shortage of advice from those who are going through their own trials and tribulations in 'getting it right'. Our suggestion would be to approach those



who appear to be consistent winners and after noting what type of equipment they use, ask if they would have time to explain exactly what they use and why.

Our observations at matches indicate that the choice of handgun action type will be either a revolver or one of a self-loading design. Remember that the 2002 NHA prescribes that all calibres must be not greater than .38, except for those events such as Handgun Metallic Silhouette. NRA Action Pistol competitors use either a .38 Super or 9mm Parabellum in self-loaders, and .38 Special/.357 Magnum in revolvers. Minimum calibre allowed by the NRA rules for any handgun of any type in any category is 9mm fuelled by not less than a power

factor (bullet weight x muzzle velocity) of 120,000.

Handguns used in NRA Action Pistol shooting fall into four categories for the competition: Open, Open Modified, Metallic Sight and Production.

Open class includes highly modified firearms with optical sights allowed and other major changes to the handgun including 'wings' for stabilising the handgun when used in conjunction with the barricade. These are the type that are generally used in competition and when you read of possible scores being shot and winners being decided upon the X-ring count, you can be assured that they are using specialised handguns fitted with optical sights. The

Open Modified class does not allow the metal wings and is a class suitable for IPSC open guns.

Metallic Sight class specifically disallows the use of peep, optical or electronic sights, orthopaedic grips, thumb rests or compensators or ported barrels. Barrel length on self-loaders is limited to 6.25" and revolvers 8.625". These handguns normally have custom frame extensions fitted to the base of the pistol grip so that when the competitor 'goes prone' the metal sights settle at the right 'attitude' in relation to the target. These handguns, either revolver or self-loading, are normally modified to ensure maximum accuracy coupled with reliability. IPSC standard guns and Service pistols can

Rudy Dufour Down Under

by senior correspondent Jennifer Martens



Action Pistol is just one of the disciplines that has felt the effects of the Australian Government's handgun restrictions. However, it still has a healthy following. Recently, a number of these devotees met to contest the NRA World Action Pistol Championships held at the Blacktown Pistol Club in Sydney. The event attracted hundreds of people - one of whom was the NRA's pistol department manager, Rudy Dufour.

Rudy has been with the NRA, based in Fairfax, Virginia, in the US, for seven years. He first started in the Education division and then served as the Action Pistol coordinator for four years. In October 2006, he was promoted to his current position of department manager. He is responsible for the Pistol Postal Program, Conventional Pistol and Action Pistol in the US. Under this banner, he is responsible for running the state, regional, national and international pistol competitions. It was this aspect of his job that brought him to Australia for the first time to coordinate policies and procedures for the NRA Action Pistol Championships event management staff and to serve as a technical advisor and as an NRA representative on the protest committee.

His goal as the pistol program director is to generate interest in competitive shooting, specifically among young people. Within Action Pistol, Rudy encourages young shooters just starting out to use a rimfire pistol rather than a centrefire pistol because a rimfire is often more economical.



Taking time to see the outback was a highlight of Rudy Dufour's trip Down Under.

"Once the interest has been established, they can move up to a centrefire," said Rudy. "Often, people think they need to have all the specialised gear, which is often prohibitive."

One of Rudy's more exciting tasks is to run the National Action Pistol Championships - better known around the world as the prestigious Bianchi Cup. In 1979, John Bianchi of Bianchi Holsters and Ray Chapman, a well-known IPSC champion, teamed up to create an event that paired top-level competition with an impres-

sive social event. And, for the past 28 years, that has been the case as hundreds of elite pistol shooters from around the world come to contest the event and win a portion of the thousands of dollars available in prizes.

Rudy's shooting career started when he joined the Marine Corps' Competition in Arms Program. It was there he learned the finer techniques of the shooting sports. When he wasn't competing, he served as a combat photographer. After 22 years, he retired as a gunnery sergeant.

The skills he learned during that time have earned him the titles of distinguished rifle marksman, pistol shot and smallbore prone shooter. These are titles given by the NRA and Marine Corps and earned by competing in various competitions and accumulating points based on performances and placings at the events. Some of his other shooting accomplishments include being a member of the Marine Corps High Power Rifle team, winning a smallbore national title and competing in the US Olympic shooting trials in 1984.

While on his visit to Australia, Rudy was pleased to find that Australian shooting associations such as the SSAA have similar interests and goals as the NRA and that they are doing much to generate interest in the shooting sports. Rudy said his experience in Australia was first-rate. He has taken back to the US a positive impression of the Australian people, the landscape and of the future of all types of Australian shooting sports. ●



shoot in this category. You may find most of the top NRA Action Pistol competitors enjoy shooting both classes of firearms if and when the competition facilities allow.

Production class allows a handgun which, according the NRA rule book, is or has been a catalogue item readily available to the (licensed) general public equipped with metallic sights. IPSC production handguns suit this class. International rules dictate the calibre must be 9mm or more, although recent changes to Australian firearm laws bans Australian sporting shooters from owning handguns above .38 Special/9mm in calibre, so for us Australian shooters it is 9mm Parabellum, .38 Special, .38 Super, .357SIG or .38-45. So this category allows

an out-of-the-box S&W M&P, Glock Walther or a Colt Government model in calibres of political correctness. The rules are specific in relation to 'custom shop' models in that these handguns are not allowed. When you see scores shot with Production and Open class handguns, you will observe the disparity that indicates the advantage that optical sights offer. This category will, however, get you up and away in NRA Action Pistol for a minimal cost.

Luckily, for Australian handgun competitors, there are a number of experienced custom gunsmiths who are capable of modifying a stock handgun to a serious competitive standard. Well-known names such as Ray Pulver, Relic Custom, Pete's Gun

Works and Steve Burgan are some of the dealers available to assist you in customising standard handguns. These guys are conversant with NRA Action Pistol rules and what can and can't be done to your handgun to ensure compliance with those rules.

While the NRA rule book lists several courses of fire which can be used for shooting Action Pistol competition, the NRA Bianchi Cup normally consists of four stages: the Practical event, Barricade event, Moving Target event and Falling Plates event.

The Practical event has four stages from 10, 15, 25 and 50 yards. Facing two targets downrange, the competitor engages targets with various time limitations. The Bar-

Pete's Gun Works - *moving forward*

by Gary Fleetwood

NRA Action Pistol is one of Australia's most dynamic sporting handgun events, with one of the four stages, the Moving Target event, requiring the competitor to engage from various distances a moving target which is exposed for six seconds.

With the advent of optical sights and the advancement of handgun accuracy, it is little wonder that a mount for the sight which compensates for the lead required on the moving target would at some stage become readily available.

With a flick of the mount's spring-loaded direction lever, the alignment of the scope and the point of impact is corrected for the movement of the target at all four distances at which the competitor engages the target (10, 15, 20 and 25 yards). As the target moves from left to right or right to left, the competitor moves the direction lever either left or right off-centre and the alignment is corrected. The only issue the shooter needs to remember is the correct movement of the direction lever for the direction of the target they face or to return the lever to the correct position for the next direction of the target.

New South Welshman Pete Williams of Pete's Gun Works manufactures the mount



The direction lever (centre under the rear optical lens) is moved to compensate for the lead required on the moving target.

base from 7000 series aircraft aluminium. The mount saddle and the direction lever are machined from 4140 steel using a CNC milling machine and after the basic shape is formed, all the angles are wire cut by a CNC wire cutting machine. Once finished, the pieces are hardened to Pete's specification.

The pins and locking mechanism are machined and then all the pieces are hand-fitted together to a tight fit. The aluminium parts can be anodised different colors at the



Pete's Gun Works mover mount creates a lot of interest at matches.

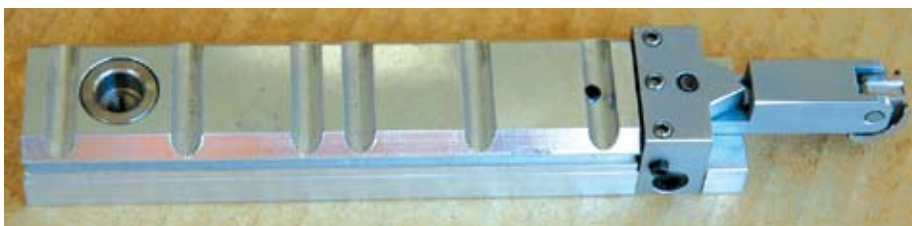
customer's request at an extra cost. The mounts sell for \$440, plus \$20 for fitting.

Pete's first batch of 25 mounts is almost sold out. He does not accept credit card, but customers can pay by cash, B-pay or cheque. Pete has sold mounts internationally and is pleased with the acceptance of his product by NRA Action Pistol competitors.

"I usually have one or two already made up. If I need to make one from scratch, it takes up to two weeks, depending on how busy I am on repairing guns or building them," says Pete.

Pete's Gun Works also makes custom parts for guns and offers a blueing, hard chroming and polishing service to the sporting shooter.

For more information, contact Pete's Gun Works on 0412 415 089, fax 02 9628 4502 or email petesgunworks@bigblue.net.au ●



The spring-loaded direction lever indexes upon the hardened steel lock.



ricade event is similar, but the competitor may use a barricade situated at 10, 15, 25 and 35 yards. The Moving Target (Modified) has the competitor facing a target which comes from behind cover and travels 60ft in six seconds before again being covered from fire. The competitor engages each target during four stages at 10, 15, 20 and 25 yards within the six-second exposure time.

The Falling Plate event is probably the most recognisable NRA Action Pistol stage with the competitor engaging 6x8"-diameter metal plates in various time-frames from distances of 10, 15, 20 and 25 yards. It is acknowledged as the most unforgiving stage as each miss takes away 10 points and multiple misses can be fatal for hopes of a winning position. It is not unusual for top competitors to successfully hit all plates and shoot-offs are becoming more prevalent in high-level matches. Unlike some other forms of handgun events, the Falling Plate match is a crowd pleaser due to its high visual impact. Forty-eight rounds are fired for a possible score of 480 points on each stage. The total match score is 1920, with the winner often decided by the number of X-ring hits obtained in the 10 ring.

Victorian SSAA member Frank Tait has developed Australia's own NRA Action

Pistol scoring program, which can be downloaded free from www.1920action.info This program has become the standard format of match score processing and all clubs intending to take up the Action Pistol challenge are urged to utilise this system.

Holsters must be safe, practical, serviceable and suited to the pistol used and must retain the handgun during any activity within a course of fire.

At this stage, the SSAA has four NRA official referees: Richard 'Dickie' Seibert (Victoria), Kaye McIntyre and Gary Fleetwood (ACT) and myself (NSW), with several more individuals identified for endorsement from the NRA. These four people are available to referee at any SSAA-approved or NRA-sanctioned match and can be contacted through the SSAA NRA Action Pistol website at www.actionmatch.com.au

With support from Sydney-based Grycol International, the Australian representative of Smith & Wesson, the SSAA will continue to promote this competitive discipline to ensure all sporting shooters who legally own and use sporting handguns can access international competition to further develop their competitive skills and justify ownership of their firearm. The SSAA Action Match program culminates in the annual



SSAA (Vic) team member Tom Whitehead was the Top Revolver shooter at the 2006 Bianchi Cup.

Smith & Wesson Cup which in 2007 will be shot in September at the Blacktown Pistol Club in NSW. The SSAA welcomes all licensed firearm owners to compete, regardless of affiliation, and will continue to work closely with federal, state and territory governments to ensure lawful handgun competition is not isolated to Olympic and Commonwealth Games events.

For further information on NRA Action Pistol, visit the SSAA Competition Information webpage at www.ssaa.org.au/newssaa/disciplines/disciplines.html or the Action Match website at www.actionmatch.com.au or email Gary Fleetwood on bianchi@ssaa.org.au ●



Friends over many years of competitive pistol shooting - Doug Koenig, Craig Ginger and Rob Leatham.